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ABSTRACT

The results are reported of a survey of teachers of English as a second language (ESL) in five Washington, D.C. metropolitan area university language institutes concerning the working conditions most conducive to job satisfaction. The survey found several weak indicators: style and perceived overall administrative effectiveness of the director; feelings of professional advancement; and participation in goal-setting. However, no one variable was found to significantly influence job satisfaction. Several other incidental findings of interest included the brief ESL teaching experience of the majority surveyed and the similar proportions of all respondents and less-satisfied respondents who were looking for another job. Further inquiry into these findings and into the attitudes of ESL teachers in other teaching situations, such as adult education programs, is recommended. The survey instrument and cover letter are appended. (MSE)

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JOB SATISFACTION AMONG ESL TEACHERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A PRELIMINARY STUDY

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As a relatively new profession, English As A Second Language has been and is experiencing growing pains. In recent years there has been increasing discussion about various aspects of professional issues, e.g. professional standards and teacher unionization. Such discussion has resulted in the formation within Teachers of English To Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) of several new groups. One of these groups is the Professional Standards Committee, chaired by WATESOL member Carol Kreidler. Under its auspices Profiles of Selected ESL Programs and Their Staff Employment Conditions, Volumes I and II (Romett, Butler, and Lanier 1982 and Iacobelli and Connerton 1984) have been published in an attempt to clarify the current situation in ESL. In addition, a publication of "Core Standards" by the same committee is forthcoming; this publication is an attempt to suggest general standards and guidelines within the profession. In addition to the work of the Professional Standards Committee, the discussion has led to the organization of the Program Administration Interest Section (PAIS) of TESOL, chaired by another WATESOL member, Shirley Wright. Finally, a column on professional issues now appears regularly in the TESOL Newsletter.

The discussion about professional standards is, perhaps, an outgrowth of job dissatisfaction, that is dissatisfaction with contractual agreements or lack of such, low pay, few or no fringe benefits, and perceived lack of administrative acceptance of ESL faculty as professionals. It has been my observation that faculty in most ESL programs exhibit this dissatisfaction with displays of discontent, cynicism, and general professional unhappiness. Ultimately, in fact, many ESL professionals leave the field.

There are ESL professionals, nonetheless, who do enjoy their work and who do seem professionally satisfied. The question that arises is, "Why do some ESL professionals express feelings of productivity and satisfaction with their work while others are discontent?" For the purposes of this study, the question is more specific: What conditions exist in a university ESL institute which create feelings of job satisfaction? Recognizing some of the conditions, of course, might not only contribute to the continuing discussion about professional standards, but, more importantly, may offer insights into constructive means of improving employment conditions.

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METHODS

In the fall of 1984 directors of five university ESL institutes in the Washington, D.C. area were contacted and agreed to distribute questionnaires to their faculty members. Questionnaires were given to faculty members with a cover letter which included a brief explanation of the study (See Appendices 1 and 2). A self-addressed, stamped envelope was enclosed with each questionnaire so that participants could return their responses anonymously. In addition to demographic information, these questionnaires asked for information relating to contractual agreements, work environment, academic environment, and administrative environment. The results are summarized below.

Due to time and cost constraints, this study is non-random and limited to the Washington metropolitan area. From this study, we can not generalize beyond the sample population used. Any discussion of results, therefore, will at best suggest possible trends for further investigation.

RESULTS

Of the 105 questionnaires sent to ESL faculty, 60 (64.76%) were returned. 19.1% of the respondees were males; 79.4% were females. One participant did not provide demographic information. The mean age of the participants was 39. However, ages tended to cluster between 30 and 45. This clustering is represented in Figure 1 below.

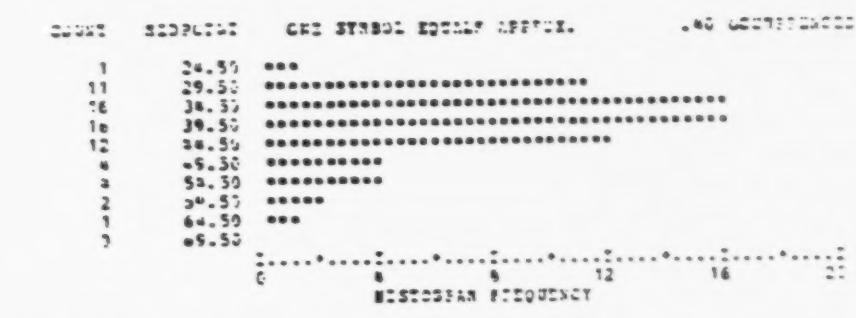


FIGURE 1. Ages of Participants

60.3% of those responding to the questionnaire had ten or fewer years ESL experience. Most taught between ten and fifteen hours per week. The majority (57.4%) of those participating were full-time instructors, either tenured or non-tenured. 55.9% of the responsees had at least a one-year letter of agreement or contract; the remainder had a term-basis contract. 61.8% of those responding had no fringe benefits. This would indicate that some teachers have a yearly contract without benefits.

A majority (64.7%) of the people who responded to the questionnaire earned $20,000 or less per year. For nearly the same number of people (68.3%), ESL was their only source of income. Moreover, 60.2% of the respondees were principal wage earners, earning more than 50% of the family income.

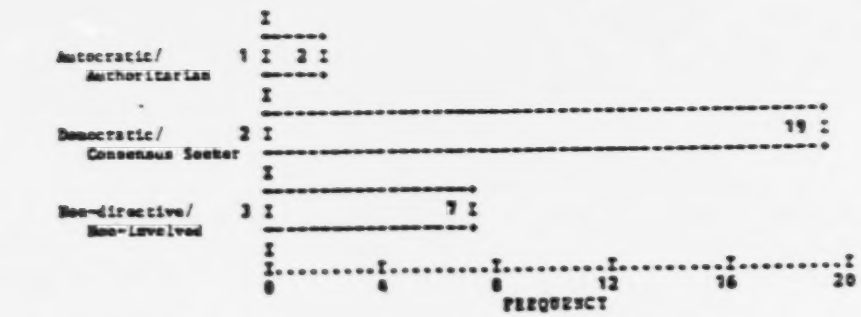
It has been said that collegiality is the main reason for remaining at a job. Interestingly, 35.3% of the participants in this study rated collegiality at their institute as low or only average. 40.3% rated the degree of idea-sharing among faculty members as low or only average.

A concern of ESL teachers is the number of contact hours which they have. This study indicates that while some people were teaching more than twenty hours per week, most taught fifteen or fewer hours per week. It should be noted that 35.4% of the people responding work in more than one ESL program.

Although most respondees felt they were becoming better teachers (89.7%), fewer (51.5%) felt they were advancing professionally. Those who were more satisfied with their jobs more often felt that they were advancing professionally than did those who were less professionally satisfied (62.1% as opposed to 48.6%). It is interesting to note in passing, however, that of those people who were less satisfied with their jobs, 38.9% were seeking another job.

Given a choice of three administrative styles, 50% of the respondees said that their directors were democratic, consensus seekers; 27.9% said their directors were non-involved; 13.2% felt their directors were autocratic, authoritarian. Six people did not respond to the question. Overall administrative effectiveness of the director was rated at the lower part of a five-point scale (from 1-3) by 61.2% of the respondees. It is worth noting, however, that 67.9% of those people who considered their jobs professionally satisfying (4-5 on the five-point scale) considered their director democratic (See Figures 2a and 2b). Also noteworthy is the fact that 54.8% of those people who considered their jobs professionally satisfying perceived their director's overall effectiveness as an administrator as very or extremely effective. On the other hand, only 25% of those who were less satisfied professionally perceived their director's overall administrative effectiveness as very or extremely effective. In general, those people responding to the survey felt that their directors appreciated their contributions to the English langauge program. Only 8.8% felt that their director didn't appreciate their contribution.

VALUE LABEL	VALUE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	VALID PERCENT	CUM PERCENT
	1	2	6.5	7.1	7.1
	2	19	61.3	67.9	75.0
	3	7	22.6	25.0	100.0
	9	3	9.7	MISSING	
	TOTAL	31	100.0	100.0	



VALID CASES 28 MISSING CASES 3

FIGURE 2a. Director Style As Rated by Participants With High Job Satisfaction Scores

VALUE LABEL	VALUE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	VALID PERCENT	CUM PERCENT
	1	7	19.4	21.2	21.2
	2	14	38.9	42.4	63.6
	3	12	33.3	36.4	100.0
	9	3	8.3	MISSING	
	TOTAL	36	100.0	100.0	

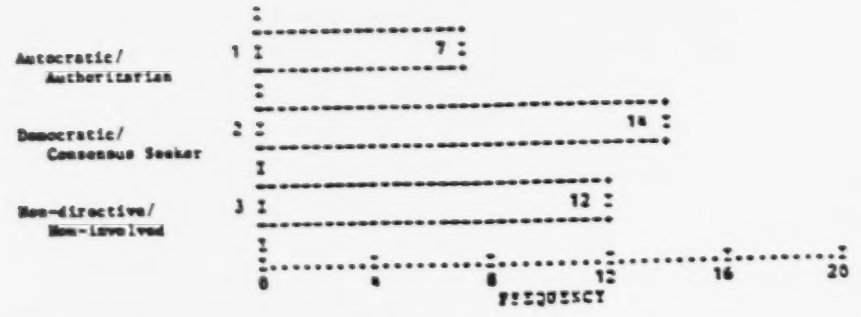


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FIGURE 2b. Director Style As Rated by Participants With Low Job Satisfaction Scores

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Teachers were also asked about their participation in goal-setting at the institute. 68.6% of those people who rated job satisfaction as low felt that their participation in goal-setting was low. Conversely, 58.2% of those people who found their work professionally satisfying felt that they participated highly in goal-setting (See Figures 3a and 3b).

VALUE LABEL	VALUE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	VALID PERCENT	CUM PERCENT
	1	5	16.1	17.2	17.2
	2	1	3.2	3.4	20.7
	3	6	19.4	20.7	41.4
	4	5	16.1	17.2	58.6
	5	12	38.7	41.4	100.0
	9	2	6.5	MISSING	
	TOTAL	31	100.0	100.0	

VALID CASES 29 MISSING CASES 2

FIGURE 3a. Participation in Goal-Setting as Rated by Participants With High Job Satisfaction Scores

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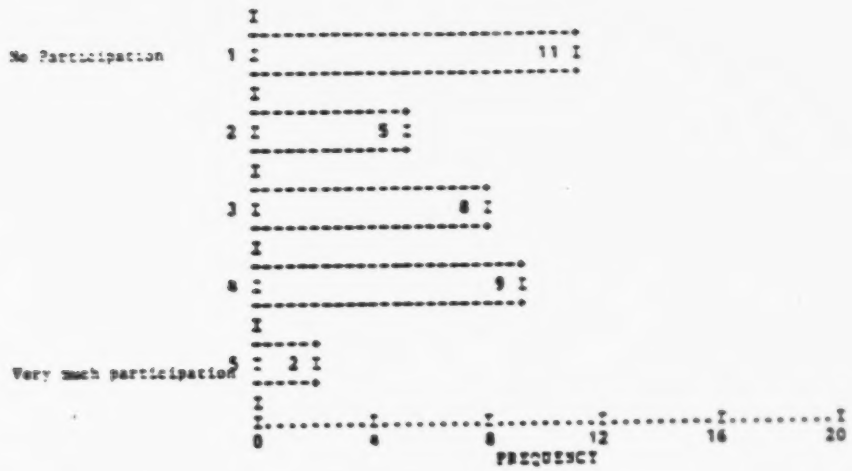
VALUE LABEL	VALUE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	VALID PERCENT	CUM PERCENT
	1	11	30.6	31.4	31.4
	2	5	13.9	14.3	85.7
	3	8	22.2	22.9	68.6
	4	9	25.0	25.7	94.3
	5	2	5.6	5.7	100.0
	9	1	2.8	MISSING	
	TOTAL	36	100.0	100.0	



VALID CASES 35 MISSING CASES 1

FIGURE 3b. Participation in Goal-Setting as Rated by Participants With Low Job Satisfaction Scores

Superficially, it seems that certain conditions might affect job satisfaction, e.g. perception of overall director effectiveness, director style, professional advancement, participation in goal-setting, and so on. However, an examination of Pearson correlation statistics showed that no one variable on the questionnaire correlated highly with job satisfaction, the dependent variable. The strongest correlations were between satisfaction and director effectiveness ($r=.39$; $p=.001$), satisfaction and gross annual salary ($r=.35$; $p=.002$), and satisfaction and effectiveness of meetings ($r=.34$; $p=.003$). These are certainly not strong correlations and could be attributed simply to statistical chance.

To determine whether several variables together might correlate highly with job satisfaction, a multiple regression test was run, correlating satisfaction with a group of eight variables: idea-sharing, appreciation of the director, effectiveness of the director, director style, feelings that one was becoming a better teacher, feelings of professional advancement, participation in goal-setting,

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and collegiality. The result showed that Multiple R=.49. Such a result indicates that the variables cumulatively considered will produce a stronger correlation with job satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

How well has the original question been answered? What conditions exist in university ESL institutes which create feelings of job satisfaction? Based on the results of this project, there are indications--and these are very weak indications--that in the sample population certain conditions may influence job satisfaction. Style and perceived overall administrative effectiveness of the director, feelings of professional advancement, participation in goal-setting, for example, were of some interest. However, it was found that in this study, no one variable significantly influenced job satisfaction. Perhaps other questions, overlooked in this study, need to be asked. Or perhaps the same questions asked differently would produce different results. In addition, a larger, random sample of the population might produce different results.

Several points and questions come to mind as a result of this study and are worthy of note. First, the majority (60.3%) of the teachers responding to the questionnaire had ten or fewer years ESL experience. Why only ten years experience? Where are those people who began teaching twenty years ago? Are they now administrators or have they left the field? Why? A study of the attitudes of people who have left ESL, if the people can be found, might provide more concrete information about conditions which influence job satisfaction or, at least, job dissatisfaction. In addition, 33.8% of all respondees said they were looking for another job, while 38.9% of those people who are less satisfied with their jobs were looking for another job. Why is there so little difference between the two groups? What is the motivation for staying at or leaving an ESL job? Finally, this project focused on the attitudes of ESL instructors in higher education. Similar studies of other areas of ESL would probably yield different results. Studying conditions of teachers in Adult Education, for example, where full-time contracts and fringe benefits are rarely given, might allow for a very different analysis of conditions which affect job satisfaction. These questions, while related to this project, are not within its scope. Further investigation of these subjects might very well provide additional information which would be valuable for on-going discussion of professionalism in ESL.

* * * * *

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THE AUTHOR

Lois Kleinhenn Lanier is the Program Coordinator and an instructor in the Maryland English Institute at the University of Maryland College Park. She has taught in Adult Education and overseas in Japan and China.

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APPENDIX 1

Cover Letter

8115 Roanoke Avenue
Takoma Park, Maryland 20912

October 29, 1984

Dear ESL Teacher:

I am doing a study of employment conditions as a requirement for a graduate course in organizational evaluation. To complete this project, I am surveying teachers who work at several Washington area higher education ESL programs. The director of your program has kindly agreed to allow me to send a questionnaire to you. Would you please help me in this study by taking five or ten minutes to complete the attached questionnaire? Please use the self-addressed, stamped envelope to return the questionnaire to me by November 9. Do not write your name on the questionnaire.

Of course, all information is absolutely confidential. In any future discussion of this study, institutes will not be identified by name. Copies of my final report will be sent to directors of participating institutes. If you would like a copy of the report, please feel free to call me at home (587-3413) or at work (454-6545) or to write to me at the above address.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Lois Kleinhenn Lanier

Lois Kleinhenn Lanier

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APPENDIX 2

EMPLOYMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Sex:_____

Age:_____

Marital Status:_____

Educational Background (highest degree):

_____BA/BS

_____MA/MS

_____Ph.D.

1. How many years of ESL teaching experience do you have?
   - _____less than a year
   - _____1 to 5 years
   - _____6 to 10 years
   - _____more than ten years
2. How long have you been employed at your current position?
   - _____less than a year
   - _____1 to 5 years
   - _____6 to 10 years
3. What is your employment status?
   - _____part-time temporary
   - _____part-time regular
   - _____full-time, non-tenure track
   - _____full-time, tenure track
4. What type of employment agreement do you have?
   - _____a multi-year contract or letter of appointment
   - _____a contract or letter of appointment, one-year basis
   - _____a contract or letter of appointment, semester or term basis
   - _____none
5. What fringe benefits do you have? (Check as many as appropriate.)
   - _____paid annual leave/vacation
   - _____paid sick leave
   - _____medical insurance
   - _____unemployment insurance
   - _____retirement insurance
   - _____none
   - _____tuition remission
6. What is your gross annual salary from all sources?
   - _____less than $10,000
   - _____$21,000 - 25,000
   - _____$10,000 - 15,000
   - _____more than $25,000
   - _____$15,000 - 20,000
7. What percentage of your gross annual income is from ESL work?
   - _____100%
   - _____40%
   - _____80%
   - _____20%
   - _____60%
8. Please check your status as a wage earner.
   - _____sole support for self and/or family
   - _____principal wage earner for family (over 50%)
   - _____supplementary wage earner for family (under 50%)

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9. Is the office space provided adequate for your work?

_____yes _____no

10. How many people share an office with you?

_____one _____four

_____two _____more than four

_____three

11. Do you have your own desk?

_____ yes _____no

12. How often do faculty members in your program share ideas about teaching?

1 2 3 4 5
infrequently frequently

13. How would you rate the collegiality among faculty and/or staff in your program?

1 2 3 4 5
very low very high

14. What kinds of support and equipment are you given by the staff for instructional activities?

_____ typing _____video players

_____duplicating services _____video recording facilities

_____overhead projectors _____audio recording facilities

_____tape recorders _____films

_____language lab facilities _____other:_____

15. How helpful is the office staff in your program?

1 2 3 4 5
not at all helpful extremely helpful

16. How many hours do you teach per week? _____

17. Do you teach only at the program where you received this questionnaire?

_____yes _____no

If you answered no, how many hours do you teach in the program where you received this questionnaire?_____

18. How many students are usually in your classes?

_____1 to 5 students _____16 to 20 students

_____6 to 10 students _____more than 20 students

_____11 to 15 students

19. If you are not salaried, are you paid for preparation time?

_____yes _____no _____not applicable

20. How much teaching autonomy are you given in the classroom?

1 2 3 4 5
none complete

21. Do you feel that you are becoming a better teacher?

_____yes _____no

22. Do you feel that you are advancing professionally?

_____yes _____no

23. Do you think that students feel your English program is meeting their needs?

_____yes _____no _____somewhat

24. Do you think that your English program is meeting students' needs?

_____yes _____no _____somewhat

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25. How would you describe the administrative style of your director?

_____autocratic/authoritarian

_____democratic/consensus seeker

_____non-directive/non-involved

26. How would you rate your director's overall effectiveness as an administrator?

1 2 3 4 5
not at all effective ... extremely effective

27. How effectively are faculty/staff meetings run?

1 2 3 4 5
not at all effectively ... extremely effectively

28. Is participation in national professional organizations encouraged?

_____yes _____no _____somewhat

29. Are your conference expenses paid?

_____yes _____no _____somewhat

If 'yes' or 'somewhat', indicate the usual level of support.

_____full _____25%

_____75% _____less than 25%

_____50%

30. Are you given leave for professional development?

_____yes _____no

31. To what degree do you as a faculty member participate in goal-setting for your program?

1 2 3 4 5
not at all ... very much

32. Do you feel that your director appreciates your contribution to the ESL program?

_____yes _____no _____somewhat

33. Do you feel that your program is an integral part of the university?

_____yes _____no _____somewhat

34. To what degree is your present job professionally satisfying?

1 2 3 4 5
not at all satisfying ... extremely satisfying

35. Are you actively looking for another job?

_____yes _____no

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